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For Immediate Release

Date: November 25, 2003
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**Predictions of a Severe Flu Season Prompt Health
Department to Urge Flu Shots**

Health Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently warned the public that this year's flu season could be more severe than in previous years. As a result, the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center is continuing to urge residents to get their flu shots now.

"We have plenty of vaccine to meet the demand," said the Health Department's Executive Director Dale Galassie. "It takes about two weeks to develop maximum protection after a flu shot, so now is the time to get your shot and encourage those you love to also protect themselves."

The CDC reported that the United States may be in for a more severe season because flu viruses are circulating at a higher level than usual at this time. Another reason is that the group of influenza viruses circulating this year has in previous years caused a lot of people to become ill and to develop complications.

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The Health Department began offering flu clinics in October. The final flu clinic is scheduled for Tuesday, December 16, at the Waukegan Township Senior Center, 414 S. Lewis, from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Waukegan. Residents may also obtain flu shots at one of the Lake County Flu Coalition clinics. For a schedule of these clinics, visit:

www.lake.il.us/health.

Health officials recommend that the following individuals get vaccinated against influenza:

- person 50 years and older
- residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house persons of any age who have long-term illnesses;
- adults and children 6 months of age and older who have chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma;
- adults and children 6 months of age and older who need regular medical care or had to be in a hospital because of metabolic diseases (like diabetes), chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system (including immune system problems caused by medicine or by infection with HIV/AIDS);
- children and teenagers 6 months to 18 years who are on long-term aspirin therapy and therefore could develop Reye Syndrome after the flu; and
- women who will be more than 3 months pregnant during the flu season.

In addition, health officials recommend the following groups of people get vaccinated to prevent spreading flu to individuals at high risk of complications from flu:

- doctors, nurses, and other employees in hospitals and doctors' offices, including emergency response workers;
- employees of nursing homes and long-term care facilities who have contact with patients or residents;
- employees of assisted living and other residences for people in high-risk groups;
- people who provide home care to those in high-risk groups;
- and household members (including children) of people in high-risk groups.

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Influenza is an upper respiratory infection that can make persons of any age extremely ill. Symptoms include sudden fever, chills, cough and soreness, and aching in the back, arms and legs. Although most people are ill for only a few days, some (particularly older adults and the chronically ill) can experience a much more serious illness. Senior citizens are recognized as a special risk group for flu and its complications, as the illness can be very debilitating. It is impossible to contract influenza from the vaccine.

Under specific circumstances, the flu shot may be postponed or a referral made to a physician for consultation. Those circumstances include the following:

- The patient has a history of allergy to eggs and egg products.
- The patient has had Guillain-Barre Syndrome.
- The patient has a fever or an active infection.

For more information, please contact the Health Department's Immunizations Program at: (847) 377-8470.

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